

VZCZCXRO2595  
PP RUEHCI  
DE RUEHKT #1089/01 1521219  
ZNY CCCCC ZZH  
P 011219Z JUN 07  
FM AMEMBASSY KATHMANDU  
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 6137  
INFO RUEHLO/AMEMBASSY LONDON PRIORITY 5400  
RUEHKA/AMEMBASSY DHAKA PRIORITY 1330  
RUEHLM/AMEMBASSY COLOMBO PRIORITY 6097  
RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 5791  
RUEHIL/AMEMBASSY ISLAMABAD PRIORITY 4125  
RUEHNE/AMEMBASSY NEW DELHI PRIORITY 1533  
RUEHCI/AMCONSUL KOLKATA PRIORITY 3535  
RHMFISS/CDR USPACOM HONOLULU HI PRIORITY  
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RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY  
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY  
RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1673  
RUCNDT/USMISSION USUN NEW YORK PRIORITY 2722

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 KATHMANDU 001089

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 06/01/2017

TAGS: [PREL](#) [PREF](#) [PHUM](#) [PTER](#) [PGOV](#) [BT](#) [NP](#)

SUBJECT: FOREIGN MINISTER HOPES FOR MORE PROGRESS ON MAOIST  
BEHAVIOR, ELECTIONS

REF: A. KATHMANDU 1059

[1](#)B. KATHMANDU 1069

Classified By: Ambassador James F. Moriarty for reasons 1.4(b/d).

Summary

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[1](#)1. (C) On May 31, Assistant Secretary of State for Human Rights Barry Lowenkron highlighted to Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan U.S. concern regarding continued Maoist abuses; he also stressed the need to set a timetable for the Constituent Assembly (CA) election and to include marginalized ethnic groups in the process. Foreign Minister Pradhan said that the Government of Nepal (GON) was "trying its best" to resolve problems with the Maoists, but questioned Maoist intentions to join a multiparty democratic system. She acknowledged that the time was ripe to include marginalized ethnic groups and suggested that the eight parties would reach a consensus soon on the CA election date. Both agreed that the election needed to be fair and free from Maoist intimidation. Lowenkron noted that the USG had set aside additional resources to assist Nepal with the peace process and the election. Pradhan said that the absence of law and order had perpetuated a climate of impunity with regards to human rights abuses. Lowenkron suggested that the appointment of commissioners to the National Human Rights Commission would signal that the GON took its responsibility to protect human rights seriously.

Maoist Behavior Unimproved

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[1](#)2. (C) In a May 31 meeting with Foreign Minister Sahana Pradhan, Assistant Secretary of State for Democracy, Human Rights and Labor Barry Lowenkron expressed U.S. interest in helping Nepal realize a sustainable peace and a successful democracy. The Foreign Minister acknowledged that human rights abuses continued, particularly on the part of the Maoists, stalling progress towards a Constituent Assembly (CA) election. She highlighted the May 25 incident in which Young Communist League (YCL) cadre attacked the UN vehicle carrying the Ambassador and the Representative of the UN High Commissioner for Refugees as an example of poor Maoist

behavior (Refs A,B). Lowenkron said this incident had caused some consternation in Washington; it had demonstrated the uncertain political dynamic in Nepal. He pointed out that the Maoist leadership had created the YCL at the same time it was signing peace agreements with the GON. Referring to Secretary of State Rice's statements that "progress in

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democratic development is not often linear, but it is important to have the trajectory right," Lowenkron accepted that there would be problems along the path to democracy, but expressed concern regarding Maoist intentions. Pradhan agreed that the biggest question remained whether the Maoists genuinely intended to join a multiparty democratic system.

Minority Inclusion and an Election Timetable Needed Soon

13. (C) A/S Lowenkron emphasized the need for the Government of Nepal (GON) to set a timetable for the CA election and to include ethnic minorities and marginalized groups in the process. The Foreign Minister commented that inclusion was an issue the Ambassador regularly raised with Nepali political leaders. Certain groups in Nepal had suffered for centuries from not having a voice; these groups now felt the time was ripe to have their voices included in the political process. She believed the Nepali people were eager to vote in a CA election and frustrated with the delay. Pradhan suggested that the CA election date would be discussed at the eight-party meeting May 31, but that the problems facing the political leaders were numerous. The UN Mission in Nepal supported this process and understood the constraints posed by continued insecurity, she added. Lowenkron noted that the USG had set aside additional resources to assist Nepal with the peace process and elections.

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Election Must Be Free and Fair

14. (C) A/S Lowenkron commented that holding a free and fair election required a secure environment. Pradhan agreed, suggesting that the voters would not come out for the election if they felt at risk. All of the mainstream political parties in the GON wanted free elections without Maoist intimidation, she added. Despite joining the interim government in April, the Maoists had failed to change their behavior. They continued to take the law into their own hands. The political parties were trying to reach an understanding with the Maoists, but the Maoists had so far failed to act like a political party. "They don't understand the concept of mainstream," she said. The Ambassador recalled a Maoist leader's repeated remark that the Maoists wanted to create a new mainstream and not work within the current mainstream.

Human Rights In Nepal

15. (C) The Foreign Minister acknowledged that the absence of law and order in the country had perpetuated a climate of impunity with regards to human rights abuses. The latest crisis within the Bhutanese refugee camps in Jhapa district had demonstrated how easily problems could spiral out of control, she stated. Lowenkron hoped that the GON would soon appoint commissioners for the National Human Rights Commission; this would send a positive signal that the GON took its responsibility to protect human rights seriously. Pradhan said that the Government was "trying its best" on elections and human rights. She expected that problems with the Maoists would eventually be resolved. The Nepali people used to believe the Maoists had something to offer; now they were fed up with continued Maoist abuses. She believed the Maoists realized they would perform poorly in the CA election, particularly with the YCL continuing to terrorize

people throughout the country. Lowenkron reiterated the U.S. commitment to help Nepal in a free and peaceful transition that would lead to an inclusive, multiparty democracy.

Comment

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¶6. (C) Although Foreign Minister Pradhan suggested that the government was doing what it could to move forward on elections, rein in Maoist abuse, and protect human rights, she did not seem unduly hopeful that the major political parties would resolve their differences with the Maoists. We share her skepticism about Maoist intentions. The Maoists are arguing among themselves these days on the best way forward, but we see no indication to date that any of their leaders have renounced the use of violence and terror as political instruments.

¶7. (U) Assistant Secretary Lowenkron cleared this cable.  
MORIARTY